



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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Lung Association report shows air-quality improvement

BATON ROUGE -- The American Lung Association pointed out Louisiana's continued improvement in air quality in its annual State of the Air report that was released on Thursday. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has noted that the state's air quality meets federal standards in all areas except for five parishes around Baton Rouge.

"Louisiana parishes saw significant improvement in ozone days with six improving from an F to a C, and six others improving by one or two grades," the report stated. "One city, Fort Polk South-DeRidder, La., made the list of least ozone-polluted cities. Particle pollution levels remain consistently good in the state."

The Lung Association's report centered on two primary pollutants – ozone and particle pollution. Ozone is a reactive form of oxygen that is caused when pollutants mix on hot, sunny days. It is a major pollutant that causes lung irritation.

Particle pollution comes from solid and liquid particles suspended in the air. The particles can be directly emitted from a source or formed in the atmosphere as part of a chemical reaction. Pollutants emitted when fuel is combusted, such as at power plants that use fossil fuels or in automobiles, are a main source of particle pollution.

The Lung Association cited Concordia, Jefferson, Lafayette, St. Bernard, Tangipahoa and Terrebonne on its list of "cleanest counties for short-term particle pollution." Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux and Lafayette-Acadiana were named to the list of the top 58 cleanest cities for short-term particle pollution.

"I agree with the American Lung Association that air quality in Louisiana is getting better," DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel said. "We meet all of the federal requirements for air quality standards except for the five-parish Baton Rouge area which is not in attainment for ozone. We are working with industry and the community to reach that standard."

The Lung Association's ozone grades were based on the air quality index. That index measures the quality of air based on a color scheme with orange as unhealthy for sensitive groups, red as unhealthy for everyone and purple as very unhealthy.

East Baton Rouge Parish received the highest ozone score in the state and was one of only four parishes to receive an F. This is down from 10 in the 2004 report. East Baton Rouge had 19 orange days, five red days and none in the purple range. This is also down from the 2004 report that had the same area with 30 orange, five red and zero purple. San Bernardino in California, which also received an F, was cited as the most ozone-polluted county for ozone with 143 orange days, 89 red and 39 purple.

To learn more about air quality visit the DEQ web site at www.deq.la.gov.